and USA. Among the developing countries, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam are using irradiation technology on commercial scale. The major commodities being irradiated include meat and poultry products, spices and fruits.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. The Government have not been directly marketing the irradiated food products originating from BARC.

(e) A number of exporters and traders are radiation-processing spices and vegetables both for export and for the domestic market at the irradiation facility set up by the Department of Atomic Energy at Vashi, Navi Mumbai. The plant is being operated by the Board of Radiation and Isotope Technology (BRIT) of DAE. A women's NGO, Annapurna Mahila Mandal, has sold radiation-processed spices under the brand name 'Purnanna' through their retail outlets in and around Mumbai.

VRS in MTNL

3568. SHRI GAYA SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd. has formulated a Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) for its employees which is expected to be rolled out in the financial year 2003-04; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) No. Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

BSNL/MTNL's arrears

3569. SHRI SUKHDEV SINGH LIBRA:
DR. ABRAR AHMED:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the outstanding amount against the telephone subscribers of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd. at the end of the year 2002;

(b) the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken to recover the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) The 3 months old outstanding dues against telephone subscribers as on 31.12.2002 are as under:—

Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL): 875 crores

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL): 2655 crores

These outstanding dues are about 3% of the total billed amount.

(b) the major reasons for outstanding dues are:—

(i) Inability or unwillingness on the part of the subscriber to pay the bills.

(ii) Bills may have been issued correctly but perceived by the subscribers as inflated.

(iii) The bills may be incorrect due to data feeding error or some lacuna in the computer software.

(iv) Bills may not reach the subscribers in time.

(c) The steps taken by MTNL/BSNL to recover the arrears are:—

(i) The defaulter telephones are disconnected when the dues are not paid.

(ii) High Power Committees and Liquidation Boards have been set up to facilitate liquidation of dues.

(iii) Targets for liquidation of outstanding is set and performance monitored against them each year.

(iv) The collection efficiency is monitored each month.

(v) Outstanding Pursuit Cells are functioning at Headquarter level and also at circle level.

(vi) Where necessary, after disconnection of telephone, legal action is also initiated for recovery of the dues.